1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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difference between friends'. Moreover, economic pressure can be brought to produce social conformity and curb the heretic. In the case of a shopkeeper whose private life was open to suspicion, he found that his customers had gradually deserted him, and he had to search for work in town. Part of the village efforts to establish a new mill were provoked not only by the raising of the charges by the owners, but also by the fact that one of them had been accused of fomenting intrigues between the villagers. This added fuel to the mill's campaign 'to ruin the house of such a man'.

No study of the fellah's nutrition and its connection with cultural values has been made. The following remarks about diet in Silwa are appropriate; they are, however, inadequate as such a question requires a special enquiry by itself.

The villager has no concept of a balanced diet apart from a filling or a delicious meal. Meals, especially dinners, are often better provided after the reaping of the new harvest when food would be plentiful, and meat could be bought, while gradually the meals become poorer and meat is rarely served. It is said that 'one good meal a year is a support like a stick' in justifying one expensive meal whenever possible. Moreover, bread is always preferred to be hot, 'just coming from the oven', which means an arduous task to the housewives, as the provision of cooked food is an important part of their matrimonial duties. One of my female relatives told me that she knows of two cases where a husband had to divorce his wife because she seldom provided him with freshly-baked bread or hot 'ghamoos'—a cooked vegetable in which he can dip the bread.

The preparation and cooking of a meal is associated largely with certain kinship and neighbourly obligations. Relatives might help each other in picking the odd stones or foreign matter from the seeds before sending them to the mill, help in sieving the flour or in baking. If a woman bakes her bread in a hot oven of a neighbour (a device for saving fuel), she has to offer one of the children a loaf of bread. Neighbours and relatives might borrow loaves of bread from a woman who has just baked. After baking, a woman may send a loaf or loaves of bread to a widowed relative or send a 'dwaga'—bread to be tasted—from the newly-harvested crop.

As a rule, the villagers take three meals a day—breakfast (fatour), lunch (ghada), and an evening meal, at sunset (asha). But farmers occasionally eat between the meals anything available, which they call 'ijalla', i.e. the food that does not precipitate the next meal.

An evening meal, especially a well-prepared one, is certainly the apex of the day's work, the reward and joy for the day's efforts and toil.[1] The gathering round the table—'tablia'—for the evening meal, reflects the family unity, its hierarchy, and its discipline. The father and the children sit on the mat or on the bed round the low table to eat from one dish. If there is meat, it is the father who distributes it, giving each child his or her share, a larger portion to the older boys and less to the younger, and the

[1] For such feeling and attitude towards food, see R. Firth, *We, The Tikopia*, p. 33.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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girls, on the whole, getting less than the boys. Young girls may eat at their father's table, but after the age of twelve, sex dichotomy is established in food, and the female members of the family eat afterwards.

The meal usually starts with the invocation, 'In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful', and ends by every participant's saying 'Praise to God'. The father, as the disciplinarian, watches to see if any child shows signs of greed or wasting food by dropping it, whereupon he has to ask him to control himself, saying, 'Oh boy! Why don't you say in the name of God?' If the child continues to be careless or rude, he might be hit or given less share of the meat or his share might be given to one of his more disciplined brothers. Generally speaking, children are expected to be silent and obedient at meals. A child's complaint about food is not tolerated as such a complaint removes 'baraka'.

The end of more pretentious meals, especially on festival occasions, always witnesses the family's remembrance of its deceased members, when the father asks all the members present to recite the 'Fatiha' from the Koran for the souls of the dead. The eve of the two religious feasts Ramadan and Adha is called Rahamat—mercy, where practically every family prepares a good meal at the end of which they ask God to have mercy on their deceased. On the morning of the feast-days, the women-folk make special wheat bread, which they take to eat or distribute among children or whoever is present at the cemetery, asking them to read the Fatiha for their dead.

Hospitality is shown by offering an excessive amount of food. In case of guests, the table or tray is arranged with loaves of bread all round, no gaps being left. The guests should be made to feel that there is an abundance of food and 'ghamoos', and should be encouraged all the time to eat by saying, 'Go ahead; do your best; try more of this', and so on. The etiquette of hospitality is that while the guest must show a kind of restraint, the host must be always persuading him to carry on. The host must also apologize for not being able to provide the right quantity and quality of food for the occasion, saying, 'May our affection cover up the deficiency in the meal'.

There is no doubt that the partaking of food is one of the main forces bringing about or reinforcing relationship between members of this community and between them and other neighbouring villages. 'There is bread and salt between us' is a strong binding moral force between two people or two families, and to betray bread and salt is almost a sin, which is punishable either in this world or in the next. The commensalism of the clan-meals in the breaking of the daily fast during the whole month of Ramadan, breakfast on the mornings of the two feasts and on funeral days is a reminder of, and contributor to, group solidarity. Boys who carry their fathers' trays of food are usually exchanged, and sent to eat at another man's tray.

At the beginning of the fresh harvest, a special meal is provided by

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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neighbours in the field, where a small lamb or goat is killed in the field and cooked, on this occasion, by the men, while the women send the children with bread to the farm for the meal. It must be noticed that on this occasion, as well as at most communal meals, meat is served in one dish and is divided by one member or two amongst the participants. Such a meal will be followed by somebody standing up to invoke God's blessing —'baraka'—in the new harvest, as well as mercy on the deceased ancestors. Indeed Robertson Smith's remark is applicable to this community. 'The act of eating and drinking together is the solemn and stated expression of the fact that all who share the meal are brethren and that the duties of friendship and brotherhood are implicitly acknowledged in their common act.'[1]

To sum up, the village is a community of small landowners, who, irrespective of the size of their holdings, consider their land to be the basis of their livelihood and security and to be a possession for which they have great emotional attachment. There is no appreciable functional differentiation in occupations; hence, the amount of skill and knowledge required for livelihood is almost identical. In spite of a great deal of economic self-sufficiency in the peasant or rural community, and of reliance on subsistence crops, the inhabitants are still dependent on outside forces for the price of their crops and for the sale of manufactured goods and textiles. Moreover, with a population pressure, more and more of the village members have reluctantly left to seek livelihood in towns and cities and to take up work as caretakers and domestic servants. On their return to the village, such groups of people bring with them some of the town atmosphere, considering themselves 'masrawia' (been to the city). They sometimes consider themselves more refined, and are usually elegantly dressed, even adopting a different accent. Such mobility is definitely beginning to challenge in some measure the traditional stability and conventional behaviour.

In spite of the increasingly impinging forces of city life and the admiration of the villagers for city ways, the small landowners still uphold and maintain the vested common interest in favour of the traditional ways of life, symbolized in the dignity of farm-work compared to other occupations, in the importance of family unity and honour of ancestry, in the religious ethic based on contentment and abhorrence of pleasure-seeking, and in social sensitivity to shame-provoking situations.

Furthermore, the feeling of equalitarianism is so striking in this community that any schematic class-division is very difficult to apply to its social structure. Here again, irrespective of their landholdings, they all eat from their hand produce consisting mainly of bread and the same varieties of home-grown vegetables; they live in similar dwellings, built of stone, dried mud and palm trunks, constructed by the village masons

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, London, 1894, p. 265.

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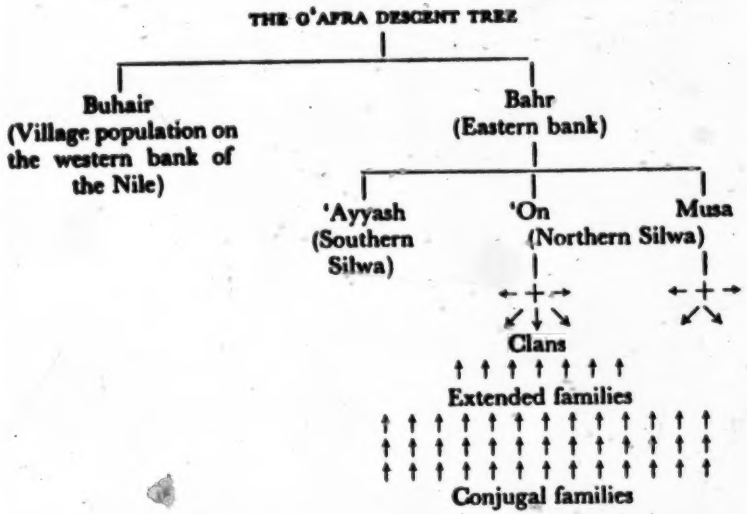
THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

621 The genealogical pattern, based on the 4g (lateral descent), reveals itself with diminishing range throughout the social structure of the village down to the smallest unit. The village is divided into two parts, each of which is subdivided into clans, and these in turn are composed of a number of extended families.[1] The whole structure of the village, as well as that of the 619 whole socio-geographic region of G'afra, could be likened to a centrifugal mechanism spreading out and out in ever-widening circles. Certain common structural norms of behaviour permeate the various segments of the centrifugal structure, manifesting themselves in varying degrees and in different circumstances.[2]



596 186 Pride of belonging to a particular family, especially more obvious in the circle of the extended family, reflects itself in one's pride in the clan, the section, the village, and in the holy descent of the G'afra stock. In the case of extended families, pride manifests itself in possessing a common horse which runs in races held on the celebration of saintly occasions, in having 613 a name for hospitality, or for scholarship and piety. Pride of clan is linked with activities in the guest house, or co-operation in digging a well. Pride 616 186 in one's section is revealed on communal celebrations especially during the celebration of the Prophet's birthday; each section proclaiming that it has carried it out in a more spectacular manner as each usually has its 'marquee' for listening to the recital of Koran and mawals (popular songs). At 619 186 the level of the G'afra as such, the sense of pride reveals itself in their holy

[1] See Nadel, 'Beni-Amer. Society', *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 1, 44.

[2] The word 'structural' here is used in the sense employed by Bateson to denote standardised details of behaviour. *Naven*, p. 25.

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should be declined by saying, 'God compensates me in a better way'.

The following three instances are concrete situations showing the working of the social structure. The first is the installation of a new corn mill by all the clans in the village to bring to an end the monopoly of the already existing privately owned mill. The rough estimates were divided into 24 kirats (parts), each section responsible for collecting the money equivalent to its 12 kirats.[1] In the second process of distribution, each section divides its share amongst the clans, and the head of each clan is responsible for collecting his share from family heads; by dividing his kirats into sahms, the people of his clan could buy a minimum of one-tenth of a sahm. No section or clan could be helped or its shares be taken by another. It was interesting to listen to the village crier calling out the names of the clans and the two sections, to induce haste in collecting the money.

Such procedure was followed for repairing the village mosque. In this case the question was not so much that of collecting money, as of recruiting the men to bring stone, water, straw, etc., for the repairs; and this was also dealt with on the same structural basis.

The third instance was the allocation of new building land to the village, which was also first divided into two sections; then each section was divided into equal parts amongst its clans, which in turn had to divide its share among the families.

The system of village government reflects a combination of central authority agents and the village social organization. The village head is an official called 'Omda' who used to be elected from a list of five people who own not less than 10 feddans. Two years ago, the law was changed and the Omda is now elected from amongst thirteen people who own enough land to make them eligible. The job is unpaid, and it is reckoned as a privilege to be elected. The Omda's seniority is something like the medieval *primus inter pares*. He represents the village on official occasions. One of his traditional and honorary functions is to receive guests, travellers, and government officials in his guest house. Silwa has also two unpaid 'Sheikhs' each representing one of the two sections of the village and thus commonly referred to as 'Sheikh hissa'; these are also elected from amongst those who are eligible (minimum requirement was 5 feddans, now being relaxed). The Omda and the two sheikhs settle the disputes that arise in the village, usually with the aid of Arab councils, or with the help of people whom they select on different occasions. Each sheikh is primarily concerned with the problems of his section (hissa').

The central government is represented by the police headquarters with a police officer or constable in charge and policemen and ghafeers. While the policemen are always from outside the village, the ghafeers are villagers, put up usually from different clans, acting as the Omda's messengers, as well as the local agents between the village and the police headquarters.

[1] The feddan has 24 kirats, and each kirat 12 sahms.

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military defeat meant the ousting of one ruling power by another.[1] Although it is these rulers who have engaged the main interest of historians, it is the habits and traditions of the common folk that have, in fact, been the ultimate forces determining the general run of Egyptian life. What Gruening wrote of Mexico, quoted by Redfield, is equally applicable to the situation in Egypt. 'In few countries is political history less significant than in Mexico, yet its historiographies are pre-eminently political.' Redfield continues: 'The formal institutions, the explicit statement of programme or policy, the bulk of contemporary documents, lie remote from the ways of the masses and record their history almost not at all. The world of the cultivated classes who alone are articulate and alone communicate freely with us, is a world apart from that of the folk.'[2]

Only to a very small extent has Silwa been affected by the forces mentioned earlier. It still preserves its folk culture as the basis of its community life. The village is a homogeneous community in the threefold implication of the term. It is homogeneous to the extent that the villagers belong, or at least consider themselves to belong, to one blood group, engaging in the same kind of work, and, moreover, characterized by slow rate of social change.[3]

The question of social change exists, however, in terms of 'setting and background', and not by itself. 'This is why a discussion of change in culture has meaning only as part of the problem of cultural stability. Both terms are relative and dependent on one another.'[4]

In the process of social change examined in Yucatan, Redfield maintains that the life of primitive peoples can be contrasted with the way of life characterizing civilization in modern urban centres. He maintains that the change is one from a relatively immobile, homogeneous society in which relationships are personal, controls familial, sanctions sacred, with a well-integrated culture, to one tending to have opposite characteristics. In short, organization, individualization, and secularization are causally interrelated with isolation, integration, and homogeneity. In Yucatan, the

[1] Gibb and Bowen say that during the Ottoman rule of the Arab Provinces, and even before that, governors and governed had little effect on each other. 'The explanation is to be found in the very lack of a complex, all-embracing political organization. . . . We may visualize Moslem society as composed of two co-existing groups, the relations between which were for the most part formal and superficial. One group formed the governing class of soldiers and officials, the other the governed class of merchants, artisans and cultivators. Each was organized internally on independent lines and neither group interfered with the organization of the other in normal circumstances.' *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part I, p. 209.

[2] Quoted by R. Redfield, *Tepoztlan, A Mexican Village*, p. 1: 'In Egypt at present, the new social order is deliberately attempting to bridge the gap between these two social strata. Many of the new legislations aim at minimizing disparities between citizens and at providing equal opportunities for all.'

[3] See Margaret Mead, 'Character Formation and Diachronic Theory', in *Social Structure*, p. 21.

[4] Melville J. Herskovits, 'The Processes of Cultural Change', in *Science of Man*, p. 144.

be feared. the village may stand on the level of the fields, barely visible, though always very compact. 361 133

A village may be situated anywhere. There is always water near, the soil and the contour of the land scarcely vary, so that the geographer cannot lay down hard and fast rules in explanation. History might have something to say on the subject, but who will ever know the past of those four thousand villages scattered far and wide along the Nile Valley? Their congestion, however, can be explained.

Not a square inch of ground must be wasted, especially if it is rich and well watered. In order to keep the cultivated area as large as possible, the unproductive space covered by human dwellings is reduced to a minimum. As we have seen, up to the nineteenth century the land and its cultivators belonged to the State and a few big landowners. The fellaheen had no interest in living on isolated farmsteads, all the more so because in that troubled period plundering Arabs or highway robbers would soon have despoiled them. 311 361 423 [721 685]

Moreover the village was the official unit for taxes, recruiting, judicial enquiries and the survey, so that it was essential for the villagers to remain within it. For these reasons, which still hold good today, the Government would not allow them to settle outside the village area. 621 651 656

These motives are now reinforced by certain new factors, such as the increase of population, the high price of land, and lack of space. The 1907 survey fixed the boundaries of the village areas once and for all. 361 161

A village may contain anything from a few hundred to several thousand inhabitants — 15,000 is not an uncommon figure — but it will always seem no more than one large family. Nothing is more like one Egyptian village than another Egyptian village. Here is another example of the monotonous uniformity which we have so often had cause to mention. There is a difference between the villages of Upper and Lower Egypt, as there is between the fellaheen of the two regions, but the likeness between them is far more striking. If an Egyptian of the older generation is shown photographs of several villages and asked whether they belong to Upper Egypt or the Delta, he will frequently give the wrong answer. 361

This is because the same kind of people and the same manner of life make for the same sort of villages. When

702 proves the capacities of the fellah. Here again the question of education comes in.

Nowadays the resistance to enlistment should be growing less. The men are better treated. When they leave the [554] army, in decent clothes, after five years of service under military discipline, they have lost their uncouthness and become *effendis*, gentlemen.

152 When a fellah is in barracks, or when he has taken 186 up work in a town so as to make a little money, he never forgets his native village, and homesickness shows on his stolid face. He tries at least to keep up contact with home and to retain some of its habits. Many a time the author [702 has written letters at the dictation of these illiterate peasants, 123] who hate being uprooted. It is always the same story: "Tell me how the crops are getting on. Give my best wishes to So-and-so, and to So-and-so".

621 If the vital interests of a village are in immediate 186 danger, each villager feels a strong sense of unity with the group; men, women, and children unite in a single force. Witness the dramatic affair of Abu Shâdy in 1936. As 579 part of a scheme to reorganise the drainage the Irrigation 186 Department had decided to cut off a canal that had watered the whole district for thirty years. The entire population rose against the labourers, against the police, even against the military, to prevent the diversion of the water. They held out against all these forces for several days. The women stood in the front line to urge on the men, the children provided a supply of missiles, and a regular strategy was improvised.

621 When a moneylender, a landowner, or a *nâzer* has carried 682 his exactions too far, and is killed with public approval, the 609 finest sleuth cannot discover the murderer, so close is the 579 conspiracy of silence. Should one village, or even a few people belonging to it, insult or injure the next, the inhabitants of the latter show a united front and avenge the insult with stones, clubs or guns (for many fellaheen possess these forbidden arms. Thanks, however, to the intervention of the police, these village wars are becoming less common, though private feuds are still as frequent, as fierce, and as sudden as ever (44).

476 Here is one of the contradictions of fellah life. In the 577 village everybody knows everybody else, and no-one would

683 rushed upon the young man. He fell, pierced by several
579 knife wounds. Bakr's men, as soon as they heard of the crime, bore down on the spot with rifles and staves, crying "Allah, Allah!". The others replied with the same cries, and the battle began in earnest. An hour later there were three dead and many wounded. By midnight the two parties, determined to fight to the death, had taken up positions in the hills. The police had the greatest difficulty in restoring order.

186 Race hatred between Arab and fellah, and religious hatred
779 between Copt and Moslem, though lulled by common lives and interests, are never completely extinguished, and furnish the explanation of many a drama.

571 So trust and mistrust persist side by side. The main
181 source of both is the soil, which unites the fellaheen if it is
186 threatened, but divides them as they own or covet it. Thus
[21] the peasant group, united against the outside world, is divided within itself. Patriotism and nationality mean no more to the fellaheen than the ideas of co-operation, public interest, or civic pride. The village in Egypt is not a community in the social sense; it is not an organism, but a mass.

Similarity in their mode of life, and propinquity, do not necessarily create a deep relationship among human beings. A certain spiritual life is needed, or at least a certain personality, to make social relations possible. The fellah appears to be as little of a personality as he is of an individual. Absorbed in the soil, and oppressed by those above him, he lives collectively but not socially. Though living in a herd, he remains solitary and aloof.

This absence of co-ordination among elements in themselves homogeneous has kept the Egyptian village, the typical peasant group, in the primitive state of a conglomeration lacking either material or intellectual system. Through fifty centuries Government after Government has maintained this formlessness, as it greatly strengthens the central authority.

Such are the common features of the fellaheen, and of the 14,000 places in which they live (*).

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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Upper Egypt

CHAPTER III.

WORKING DAYS AND HOLIDAYS, DAYS OF JUBILEE AND DAYS OF MOURNING.

WORKING-DAY LIFE OF THE COMMON PEOPLE.

In Upper Egypt the life of the ordinary inhabitant of the towns is passed in a simple and uniform manner. Before sunrise he leaves his couch, performs the morning ablutions enjoined by his religion, and repeats his early prayer. To say his morning prayer after sunrise is forbidden by the ordinances of his religion, and to allow the sun to rise above one's slumbering head is universally regarded as prejudicial to health. He then drinks his cup of coffee and smokes his pipe, either at home or in the public coffee-house. His breakfast, which he takes after his coffee (though sometimes before it), consists of the remains of his meal of the previous evening, or of cakes and milk, or for a trifle he procures from the market the ever ready national dish of *ful*, that is, stewed beans. He then engages in his vocations, buys, sells, writes, works, or moves about, all in the most comfortable, quiet, and deliberate manner. "What is not done to-day may be to-morrow"—in good Arabic, *bokra in shah Allah* (to-morrow if God please)—stands written on his forehead in large letters. The most urgent affairs leave always a quarter of an hour free in which to gossip with acquaintances over coffee and a pipe, be it in retail-shop, workshop, or office. And if many acquaintances turn up the more numerous grow these quarters-of-an-hour. Now and again he has no work, or no desire to do it, and then he drags himself from one friend to the other. Bread for himself and his family will no doubt turn up; *robinna kerim*—"the Lord is gracious (or liberal);" it is but little he requires, and in case of necessity his soft-hearted neighbour will not allow him to go supperless to bed. Even before the mid-day call of the muezzin from the minaret, he

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FRIDAY.

The week is over, and on the eve of Friday the muezzin proclaims, by a variation in words and melody, the day of the Lord, which begins at this hour, and consequently on Thursday evening. But neither now nor yet next morning does any change in the physiognomy of the working day manifest itself. The retail-dealer sits in his shop, the artisan knocks and hammers, the broker shouts, the countryman brings his fruits as at other times, it is but a very few that have even changed their clothes. Towards mid-day the muezzin calls repeatedly, not as at other times only once, and now the town assumes a remarkably deserted appearance, in the streets and market-places only idle boys make a stir, the whole grown-up male population hurry to the mosques. Here, sitting in rows upon the ground, the congregation listen to the exhortations of the uneducated lay-preacher in the pulpit, who but a short time ago sat in his shop and wove or worked at his trade of tailor or carpenter, while the attendants on a platform chant formulas in confirmation of his words. A short half hour and the whole service, the sermon of the preacher, his official supplication, and the genuflections of the worshippers, are at an end. The remainder of the day is also devoted to ordinary occupations, the Prophet having so permitted. Only the schools and the public offices remain closed.

As with the Friday so with many other days held sacred by the Mohammedans; the uninitiated is often made aware of them only by means of slices of bread and butter, which a friendly neighbour sends to the house, or, as at the Ashoora, by a kind of cosmopolitan cake, consisting of flour, wheat, barley, walnuts, hazel-nuts, raisins, rose-perfume, cinnamon, ginger, and all other possible fruits and spices.

RAMADAN.

But now comes the month of fasting—the sacred *Ramadan*. On the evening of the day preceding the first of this month